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ABSTRACT

Social learning theory maintains that parents incluence sex development by modeling and reinforcing masculinity and femininity. To further examine the effects of parental modeling and reinforcement antecedents on sex role development, 103 college students (52 female, 51 male) who had been previously categorized as masculine, feminine, or androgynous, completed two Bem Sex Role Inventory Scales (BSRI), to assess perceptions of parents' sex roles, and the Parent Child Relations Questionnaire II, to obtain retrospective reports of parent behavior in terms of love, attention, casualness, rejection, and demand. Parents (N=82) also completed the BSRI. An analysis of the results showed that for both the parental modeling and behavior variables the social learning theory was only modestly supported for females. While androgynous females perceived mothers to be more masculine than traditional feminine females, none of the parent behavior variables differentiated among the female sex role groups. However, parent behaviors contributed significantly to the prediction of daughters' masculinity and femininity. Masculinity in females was associated with the perception of accepting and masculine fathers, and attentive and masculine mothers. Femininity was best predicted from the perceived femininity and attentiveness of mothers and the perceived femininity and acceptance of fathers. In males, parent behavior was most influential in sex role development, particularly for sons' androgynous development. Androgynous males perceived both parents as loving and attentive and perceived a high degree of femininity in fathers. The best predictors of masculinity for males were the perception of paternal acceptance and maternal affection; femininity was best predicted from the perception of femininity in fathers and affection from mothers. (BL)

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Another Look at Parental Antecedents of Sex Role Development

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Abstract

The present research examined the social learning theory view that parents influence sex role development by modeling and reinforcing masculinity and femininity. Male and female subjects who were masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated reported their perceptions of parents' sex roles and parents' behavior during their childhood. Information about parents' actual sex roles was also obtained. The results indicated that parental modeling was more influential in the androgynous development of females whereas parent behavior contributed most to males' androgyny. The necessity of more complex models of sex role development in light of these results is discussed.

The concept of androgyny proposes that masculinity and femininity are independent dimensions, thus making it possible for individuals of either sex to be both masculine and feminine, that is, androgynous. According to Bem's view (Bem, 1974, 1975, 1979) androgynous individuals are mentally healthier and more socially effective than sex-typed individuals. It is therefore of interest to determine the socialization antecendents of an androgynous sex role.

Traditionally, masculinity and femininity have been viewed as outcomes of an identification process (Freud, 1949; Maccoby, 1959; Sears, 1957) in which "appropriate" sex-typing is the result of identification with the same sex parent. Cross sex-typing is understood as inappropriate identification with the opposite sex parent while undifferentiated sex-typing is seen as inadequate identification with either parent. However, the antecendents of androgyny are conceptually problematic within this framework since androgynous children appear to have identified with both mother and father.

Alternatively, social learning theory views (Bandura & Walters, 1968; Heilbrun, 1973) suggest that parents influence sex role development by serving as models of sex role attitudes and behavior and by directly reinforcing attitudes and behavior that are culturally sex-typed. Within this conceptual framework, androgyny may be viewed as the outcome of parental modeling and reinforcement of both masculinity and femininity. To the extent that identification with the same sex parent also occurs, then androgyny should be more strongly related to androgyny in the same sex parent.

The two investigations which have directly examined parental antecendents of masculinity and femininity, when they are conceptualized as independent dimensions, have produced conflicting results. Kelly & Worell (1976) found that parental affection differentiated among the male, but not the female, sex role groups. Orlofsky (1979) obtained a somewhat different pattern of results, particularly in terms of the role of parental warmth and rejection for sex-typed and cross sex-typed subjects. Further, the relationship between subjects' sex roles and their perceptions of parents' sex roles provided limited support for the modeling explanation of sex role acquisition.

The purpose of the present research was to further examine the social learning theory view of parental modeling and reinforcement antecedents of sex role development. Extending previous research, measures of parents' actual sex roles were obtained in addition to subjects' perceptions of parents' sex roles. Retrospective reports of parent behavior during childhood were obtained using a different instrument than that used in both previous investigations. Given the inconsistent pattern of earlier results, specific hypotheses were not formulated. Rather it was of interest to determine the nature of the correspondence between subjects' sex roles and actual and perceived parental sex roles and the degree to which retrospective perceptions of parent behavior are related to adult sex roles.

Methods

One hundred three subjects (51 males and 52 females) participated in the research. They were selected from the sample of 1780 Undergraduates who completed the Short Form of the Bem Sex Role Inventory

(s-BSRI; Bem, 1981). Subjects completed two s-BSRI's, to assess perceptions of parents' sex roles, and the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire - II (PCR-II; Siegelman & Roe, 1973), to obtain retrospective reports of parent behavior on five dimensions: LOVE, ATTENTION, CASUALNESS, REJECTION, DEMANDS. Five point rating scales were used for the s-BSRI and four point scales were used for the PCR-II. Higher scores indicate more of the characteristic or parent behavior.

Eighty two parents (41 mothers and 41 fathers) returned the s-BSRI's which were mailed to them. Response rate was unrelated to the subjects' sex role.

Results

The Parent Modeling Variables

Perceptions of Parents Masculinity and Femininity

The 2x4 (sex x sex role) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed a main effect of subjcets' sex role on perceptions of fathers' femininity [$F(3.95)=5.16$, $p<.01$], mothers' feminimity [$F(3.95-3.067$, $p<.01$], and mothers' masculinity [$F(3.95=2.99$, $p<.05$].

For female subjects, contrasts among the sex role groups indicated that androgynous females perceived mothers to be more masculine than feminine females and both groups rated mothers as more feminine that did undifferentiated females. The means for the female sex role groups are presented in Table 1.

Contrasts among the male sex role groups revealed that both androbynous and feminine males perceived fathers as more feminine than masculine or undifferentiated males. Masculine males saw fathers as more masculine than did feminine males while androgynous males perceived mothers as more masculine than did feminine men. The means for the male sex role groups

are presented in Table 2.

Parents' Actual Masculinity and Femininity

The ANOVAs revealed a significant sex x sex role interaction on mohters' reported femininity. Both feminine and masculine females had mothers who were more feminine than those of the undifferentiated females. No other differences were significant (see Tables 1 & 2).

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed using subjects' masculinity and femininity scores as criteria and the actual and perceived masculinity and femininity of parents as predictor variables. As indicated in Table 3, for female subjects all of the parental modeling variables contributed significantly to the prediction of masculinity and femininity. Fathers' perceived masculinity was most important in the prediction of daughters' masculinity and mothers' perceived femininity contributed most to daughters' femininity.

In contrast, for male subjects' none of the parental modeling variables predicted masculinity. However, the perceived femininity of fathers best predicted sons' femininity (see Table 4).

The Parent Behavior Variables

Analyses of ratings on the five parent behavior categories of the PCR-II indicated sex role main effects on father LOVE [$F(3,92=3.19$, $p<.05$], mother LOVE [$F(3.92)=4.14$, $p<.01$] and marginal sex role effects on mother REJECTION [$F(3,92)=2.50$, $p<.06$] and paternal ATTENTION [$F(3,92)=2.59$), $p<.06$].

For male subjects, androgynous males recalled more love from father than feminine or undifferentiated males and more love from mother than masculine or undifferentiated males. The latter groups also reported more maternal rejection than androgynous males. Compared to undifferentiated males, feminine males received more love and attention

from mothers' while androgynous males recalled more attention from both parents.

The regression analyses on subjects masculinity and femininity scores, using the parent behavior variables as predictors again revealed important differences between the sexes. The most influential predictors of females' masculinity and femininity were maternal attention and the absence of paternal rejection (see Table 3). For male subjects, masculinity was most strongly associated with an absence of father rejection, followed by maternal affection. Femininity was best predicted from the degree of maternal love and father attentiveness (see Table 4).

Discussion

The purpose of the present investigation was to test the social learning theory view that parents influence sex role development by modeling and reinforcing masculinity and femininity. Consistent with previous research (Kelly & Worell, 1976; Orlofsky, 1979) the effects of the parent variables depended upon the sex of the child, indicating that the socialization antecedents of sex roles differ for males and females.

Overall, the results for both the parental modeling and behavior variables provide only modest support for the social learning theory view of sex role development in females. While androgynous females perceived mothers to be more masculine than traditional feminine females, none of the parent behavior variables differentiated among the female sex role groups. On the other hand, parent behaviors contributed significantly to the prediction of daughters' masculinity and femininity. Masculinity in females was associated with the perception of accepting and masculine fathers and attentive and masculine mothers. Femininity was best predicted from the perceived femininity and attentiveness of

mothers and the perceived femininity and acceptance of fathers.

In contrast to the female subjects, parent behavior was more influential in the sex role development of males, particularly in terms of the sons' androgynous development. Androgynous males perceived both parents as loving and attentive and perceived a high degree of femininity in fathers. The best predictors of masculinity for males were the perception of paternal acceptance and maternal affection while femininity was best predicted from the perception of femininity in fathers and affection from mothers. Masculine models were relatively unimportant in the development of males' masculinity, perhaps because cultural standards quite clearly define appropriate behavior for males.

In conclusion, the paucity of support for the social learning theory view suggests that simplistic views which maintain a direct correspondence between modeling and behavior variables and the childs' sex role must be replaced by more complex models. The socialization antecedents of masculinity and femininity differ for males and females and the significance of modeling and behavior variables depend on the sex of the child and parent.

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Table 1

The Means for the Female Sex Role Groups: Parents' Actual and Perceived Masculinity and Femininity and the Parent-Child Relations-II Behavior Categories*

	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated
Fathers	n=(13)	(13)	(13)	(13)
Masculinity	3.84	3.65	3.68	3.52
Femininity	3.95_{a}	3.74_{ab}	3.18_{b}	3.30_{b}
Perceived Masculinity	3.49_{a}	3.78	3.88	3.28
Perceived Femininity	3.46	4.07	3.62	3.58
Love	2.85	3.35	3.31	2.69
Demands	2.48	2.55	2.91	2.42
Rejection	1.55	2.05	1.91	2.07
Casualness	2.17	2.28	2.70	2.83
Attention	2.30	2.43	3.11	2.01
Mothers				
Masculinity	3.35	3.27	3.50	3.40
Femininity	4.10_{a}	4.35_{a}	3.98_{ab}	3.35_{b}
Perceived Masculinity	3.86_{ab}	3.68_{a}	4.23_{b}	3.83_{ab}
Perceived Femininity	3.52_{ab}	3.86_{b}	4.15_{b}	3.09_{a}
Love	3.30	3.38	3.53	3.27
Demands	2.27_{a}	2.60_{ab}	2.68_{b}	2.38_{ab}
Rejection	1.44	1.41	1.19	1.48
Casualness	2.55	2.40	2.58	2.65
Attention	2.34	2.37	4.68	2.26

*Five point scales were used for the Masculinity and Femininity measures and four point scales for the Parent Behavior categories. Higher numbers indicate more of the characteristic. Numbers within rows with different subscripts differ at $p<.05$.

Table 2

The Means for the Male Sex Role Groups: Parents' Actual and Perceived Masculinity and Femininity and the Parent-Child Relations-II Behavior Categories*

	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated
Fathers	n=(13)	(12)	(13)	(13)
Masculinity	3.98	3.85	3.92	3.65
Femininity	3.72	3.36	3.78	3.45
Perceived Masculinity	4.15_a	3.38_b	3.75_{ab}	3.69_{ab}
Perceived Femininity	3.15_a	4.31_b	4.27_b	3.45_a
Love	3.10_a	2.88_b	3.33_c	2.68_b
Demands	2.45	2.64	2.63	2.75
Rejection	1.45_a	1.80_b	1.47_a	1.78_b
Casualness	2.50	2.44	2.42	2.16
Attention	2.05_{ab}	2.28_a	2.29_a	1.93_b
Mothers				
Masculinity	3.40	3.53	3.43	3.40
Femininity	4.02	4.18	4.31	4.34
Perceived Masculinity	3.52_{ab}	3.40_a	4.05_b	3.70_{ab}
Perceived Femininity	3.61	3.45	3.88	3.40
Love	3.14_a	3.38_{ab}	3.61_b	2.92_c
Demands	2.43	2.53	2.43	2.63
Rejection	1.63_a	1.50_{ab}	1.25_b	1.65_a
Casualness	2.37	2.38	2.35	2.23
Attention	2.35_{ab}	2.64_a	2.68_a	2.26_b

*Five point scales were used for the Masculinity and Femininity measures and four point scales for the Parent Behavior categories. Higher numbers indicate more of the characteristic. Numbers within rows with different subscripts differ at p .05.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting the Masculinity and Femininity of Female Subjects

The Parental Modeling Variables

Criterion = Females' Masculinity

Predictor	Multiple R	R Square	Simple R	p value
Fathers' Perceived Masculinity	.52	.27	.52	002
Mothers' Perceived Masculinity	.60	.36	.33	001
Mothers' Actual Masculinity	.63	.39	.03	002
Mothers' Perceived Femininity	.65	.42	.37	002
Fathers' Perceived Femininity	.66	.43	-.07	005
Fathers' Actual Femininity	.68	.46	-.10	007
Mothers' Actual Femininity	.68	.46	.07	016
Fathers' Actual Masculinity	.68	.46	.09	030

Criterion = Females' Femininity

Mothers' Perceived Femininity	.58	.33	.58	000
Fathers' Perceived Femininity	.70	.48	.35	000
Fathers' Actual Femininity	.72	.52	.12	000
Mothers' Actual Femininity	.74	.54	.43	000
Fathers' Actual Masculinity	.75	.56	.05	000
Mothers' Actual Masculinity	.76	.57	.12	000
Fathers' Perceived Masculinity	.76	.57	.23	001
Mothers' Perceived Masculinity	.76	.57	.13	003

The Parent Behavior Variables

Criterion = Females' Masculinity

Mother Attention	.35	.12	.35	021
Father Rejection	.42	.18	-.22	017
Mother Demands	.43	.19	-.07	038
Mother Casual	.46	.21	-.06	053
Father Attention	.48	.23	.33	063
Father Demands	.50	.25	.04	086
Father Casual	.51	.26	-.09	117
Mother Love	.52	.27	.14	164
Mother Rejection	.52	.27	-.16	238

Table 3 (cont'd)

The Parent Behavior Variables

Criterion =Females' Femininity

Predictor	Multiple R	R Square	Simple R	p value
Father Rejection	.37	.14	-.37	013
Mother Attention	.47	.22	.26	006
Mother Casual	.52	.27	-.23	006
Father Love	.54	.29	.33	009
Father Attention	.55	.31	.19	013
Mother Demands	.56	.31	.12	024
Father Demands	.57	.32	-.01	039
Father Casual	.59	.34	-.22	044
Mother Love	.59	.35	.27	071

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting the Masculinity and Femininity of Male Subjects

The Parental Modeling Variables

Criterion = Males' Masculinity

Predictor	Multiple R	R Square	Simple R	p value
Fathers' Actual Masculinity	.23	.05	.23	.202
Mothers' Perceived Masculinity	.30	.09	.18	.261
Fathers' Perceived Masculinity	.35	.12	.13	.295
Fathers' Perceived Femininity	.37	.13	.03	.405
Mothers' Perceived Femininity	.37	.14	.14	.528
Mothers' Actual Femininity	.38	.15	-.04	.647
Fathers' Actual Femininity	.39	.15	.08	.750
Mothers' Actual Masculinity	.39	.15	.01	.890

Criterion = Males' Femininity

Fathers' Perceived Femininity	.51	.26	.51	.003
Mothers' Perceived Femininity	.58	.34	.18	.002
Fathers' Perceived Masculinity	.62	.39	-.13	.003
Mothers' Actual Masculinity	.64	.40	.12	.006
Fathers' Actual Masculinity	.64	.42	.05	.012
Mothers' Actual Femininity	.65	.43	.03	.021
Mothers' Perceived Masculinity	.65	.43	.19	.040
Mothers' Actual Femininity	,65	.43	-.06	.071

The Parent Behavior Variables

Criterion = Males' Masculinity

Father rejection	.46	.21	-.46	.002
Mother Love	,48	.23	.33	.006
Father Demands	.49	.24	-.12	.015
Mother Demands	.50	.25	-.12	.030
Father Attention	.50	.25	.20	.053
Mother Casual	.50	.25	.10	.094
Father Love	,50	.25	.43	.152
Mother Rejection	,51	.26	-.30	.227
Mother Attention	,51	.26	.20	.315
Father Casual	.51	.26	.14	.413

Table 4 (cont'd)

The Parent Behavior Variables

Criterion = Males' Femininity

Predictor	Multiple R	R Square	Simple R	p value
Mother Love	.47	.22	.47	.002
Father Attention	.51	.26	.34	.003
Father Rejcetion	.57	.32	-.07	.002
Father Love	.62	.39	.29	.001
Father Demands	.64	.42	-.11	.001
Mother Attention	.66	.43	.33	.002
Mother Rejection	.67	.45	-.36	.003
Mother Demands	.68	.46	-.16	.005
Father Casual	.68	.46	.17	.010
Mother Casual	.68	.47	.17	.016